

VZCZCXYZ0010
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJM #1717/01 1181604
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 281604Z APR 06
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1810
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001717

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#)

SUBJECT: PLO NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS DIRECTOR ON POLITICAL
SITUATION

REF: JERUSALEM 1644

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1.(C) In an April 27 meeting with Consul General and Pol Chief, PLO Negotiations Affairs Director Ma'an Erekat outlined his thinking about Palestinian domestic politics and the way ahead for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Erekat saw splits within Hamas leadership in Gaza, the West Bank, and abroad, with those living in the West Bank the most conciliatory. He thought Fatah had yet to reform itself as a party and was not yet ready to face Hamas in elections. Erekat outlined his ideas for resumption of negotiations with the GOI, saying the most he thought possible at this point is an "initial dialogue," coupled with building consensus on a way forward among Palestinians, Israelis, others in the region, and international actors. He previewed an upcoming Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) trip to Washington in late May, and asked for assistance in setting up meetings with appropriate USG officials prior to the planned trip to Washington by Israeli PM Olmert. Erekat also asked for greater clarity regarding the position of U.S. dual nationals who now find themselves working in Hamas ministries.

Hamas and Fatah

12. (C) Erekat, who reports to PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat and oversees the donor-funded NSU, said he was seeing a significant difference between the messages coming out of Hamas in Gaza, the West Bank, and outside the country. He believed that those in the West Bank, such as PLC speaker Aziz Dweik and Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Shaer were being more conciliatory towards non-Hamas actors. Erekat said that Khalid Meshaal's inflammatory speech in Damascus on April 19 (reftel) was partly in reaction to those in Hamas who are talking of building bridges to other political movements. Turning to the proposed Palestinian "national dialogue" set to occur the week of May 1, Erekat thought the idea was worth considering, but that he had low expectations how the talks would turn out.

13. (C) Erekat thought that Fatah had yet to engage in serious reform efforts following its losses in the January Palestinian Legislative Council elections. He said that Fatah was still dominated by the same "roosters" as before, and observed that President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen)'s closest associations were still with the "Old Guard." Erekat expressed some exasperation with the slowness with which Abu

Mazen is standing up his office and on the President's extensive overseas travel schedule.

Next Steps for Negotiations

¶4. (C) Erekat said the NSU is busy planning possible strategies for moving forward and is concentrating on three dimensions: Palestinian domestic support, Israel and other regional players such as Jordan and Egypt, and international actors. Erekat was cautious, saying that he did not want to make any precipitate announcements ("like Abu Mazen's in Norway discussing an international conference") and wanted to engage in initial dialogue before moving on to any negotiations. The NSU is now thinking of a strategy wherein the Palestinians "pre-cook" an approach before moving forward publicly.

¶5. (C) While remaining cautious, Erekat thought it was important to begin contacts with the Israelis as soon as possible, and he asked for U.S. assistance. He observed that Hamas is beginning to talk more openly about accepting the Arab Summit Initiative, and that he did not want to lose opportunities because of lack of preparation. Erekat said that NSU members are planning to visit the U.S. and Canada the week of May 22, and asked for assistance in setting up "low-key, low-profile" meetings in Washington to explain Palestinian thinking prior to the visit of Israeli PM Olmert, which he understood would occur at the end of the month.

Dual Nationals in Palestinian Ministries

¶6. (C) Erekat raised an issue of increasing concern to dual U.S.-Palestinian nationals who have worked for long periods of time in PA ministries that are now headed by Hamas ministers and asked for guidance regarding how such officials should act in order to stay within U.S. legal requirements. Consul General explained the U.S. contact policy and stressed the need for such officials to demonstrably cut their ties to Hamas if they wanted to interact with U.S. officials. Post would welcome guidance from Washington on possible USG legal issues for Palestinian-Americans working in the PA.

WALLES